

She Waits

Kathryn Brady Ragan

Kathryn grew up in Little Rock in the period between the Depression and Pearl Harbor. She grew up loving to read and dreamed of someday being a writer. She was fortunate in having parents who loved to read and encouraged her in school. Free time not having to watch younger siblings, was spent in the nearby woods, picking flowers and blackberries, writing poetry, and reading. Only now, with 4 grown children, 4 grandchildren, a potential great-grand, and a full-time job at the UALR Law Library, has she finally begun to put pen to paper. She believes that you cannot be Irish and not want to write. She is grateful for the door that Quills and Pixels has opened for her. She loves writing and hopes that you enjoy these moments from her life.

She sits next to his parking space, and waits.

Sometimes she sits *in* his space, daring him not to see her!

She waits.

Summer seems to be early this year, and warmer temperatures are already with us, but the sun seems not to bother her at all. Charlie says I am stalking her, but I tell him it's not my fault that our breakfast nook and table sit at a window that overlooks the parking area of the condos across the street. It's impossible not to see her and know that she waits for him.

We moved into our apartment several years ago in early September. Charlie recognized and knew several of our neighbors across the street in the condos. In particular, he pointed out a slender, elderly gentleman and his wife, whom Charlie had once known in the business world.

We would be outside several times a day walking Charlie's small dog and would frequently see our neighbor walking his small white terrier. That was when we began to notice her. She would be there, waiting, when he came down the steps from his second floor condo with his terrier.

She would walk beside them to the corner, then stop and wait while he and the terrier continued on a longer walk. She would be there waiting when they returned and walk back to the condo with them. When they reached the foot of the steps he would stop and talk to

her, and sometimes reach out and touch her hair. She would lean against him, then turn and disappear towards the units down the hill. He would then turn and go up the steps with the terrier closely at his heels.

I saw the man's wife a couple of times over the several years, twice when an ambulance appeared and raced away with her to the hospital. When I asked their next-door neighbor about her condition, nothing was known except that she had been sickly for years.

His wife died after the second trip to the hospital.

We did not see him for several months, but at dinner one evening I noticed that she was there, sitting by his parking space, waiting.

"Strange," I said to Charlie. "I guess she doesn't know."

In the Spring, the man was suddenly there again, telling a neighbor that he thought maybe he could stand living in the condo without his wife. Once again, he and the little white terrier came down the steps after dinner. Once again, she was there waiting and they would walk in the early evening.

She would wait at the corner while he and his dog took a longer walk, and then all three would come back to his condo. She would lean against him for just a minute, he would touch her hair, and she would turn and disappear around the corner of the building.

It did not last.

He could find no peace living in the condo without his wife and eventually moved closer to his son and family. He comes less and less frequently and always leaves after a very short time. He cannot live there, but it seems that he cannot bring himself to sell the condo and let go.

She appears almost every day. She sits and looks at his parking space. She watches for him to come. Sometimes she sits on the new wrought iron bench he has placed near the

head of his parking space, amidst the ferns and flowers, under the trees moving softly in a gentle Southern breeze, resting her head on the back of the bench, napping. Still, she prefers to sit near the edge of the curb where she stretches her legs or walks around the front of his steps, exercising in the warmth of the sun. Her head turns immediately upon the approach of a vehicle.

But he seldom comes now.

A neighbor told me that the older gentleman had asked another condo owner to let him know if they were ever aware of anything she wanted or needed so he could get it for her.

She just appears, coming gracefully up the hill, sometimes past the swimming pool, which she cautiously avoids. It looks to me as though she has lost weight but she is as beautiful as ever. She walks with grace, her hips swinging slightly above her long legs. Her posture is always perfect, her back straight, head held high, bright inquisitive green eyes, accentuated by her dark black hair.

She knows that she is beautiful, but love will not let her be too proud to wait for him.

She waits.

"How can he just move away and leave her?" I demand of Charlie. "She loves him!"

"Yes," answers Charlie, "but she's just a cat."

MEN!